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INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS COALITION MEETS WITH U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

Industry urges tough action on Zimbabwe and reforms of the Kimberley Process

New York City - January 22, 2010 - A coalition of industry based associations and representatives met yesterday with top U.S. State Department officials in Washington to urge tough action by the Kimberley Process (KP) to implement the Joint Work Plan (JWP) to bring Zimbabwe into full KP compliance. The Joint Work Plan was developed at the last meeting of the KP in Namibia to address allegations of non-compliance and humanitarian rights violations by Zimbabwe in the Marange diamond producing area. Among other provisions, the JWP provides that diamond exports from the Marange area of Zimbabwe are to be fully examined for compliance by a KP designated monitor. No exports from that region are permitted until a KP designated monitor is in place.

The industry coalition consisted of representatives from the Diamond Manufacturers and Importers of America (DMIA), Jewelers of America (JA), the Diamond Dealers Club of New York (DDC), the World Diamond Council (WDC), the United States Kimberley Process Authority (USKPA), the Responsible Jewelry Council (RJC) and the Jewelers Vigilance Committee (JVC).

Martin Rapaport and retailer Brian Lieber also participated in the meeting by telephone. Included in the meeting were representatives from civil society including Global Witness, Human Rights Watch, World Vision, the Enough Project and others.

The industry also emphasized their interest in reforms of the KP including establishing a permanent secretariat and changing the decision making mechanisms within the KP to improve efficiencies. The industry also urged the US State Department to increase consideration of enforcement measures by the KP of established instances of non-compliance.

“A strong KP is essential to a healthy diamond industry,” said Ronald Friedman, President of the DMIA. “It is so important that KP mechanisms are seen to be performing well and addressing challenges in an efficient and effective manner.”

“The retail sector is committed to a strong KP – but the strength of the process must be clear to the consuming public. Continuing allegations of human rights violations in diamond producing regions cannot be countenanced by the retail community,” said Matt Runci, President and CEO of JA, and Chairman of the Board of the Responsible Jewelry Council.

“The successful implementation of the JWP will ensure that Zimbabwe is addressing the allegations of human rights abuses and non-compliance regarding production in Marange,” said Cecilia Gardner, General Counsel of the WDC and President of the JVC. “The plan is robust, and requires specific steps with deadlines, for Zimbabwe to take to comply with their KP obligations.”

DDC President Moshe Mosbacher indicated that, “The diamond industry must continue to work to bring Zimbabwe into compliance with the Kimberley Process, since doing so would address both charges of human rights abuse as well as prevent smuggling from that country’s Marange area.”

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